

## What Really Happened On Les Crane by Peter Stone Brown

Last Monday there was an article here on Gaslight Records, "Bob Dylan Writing 'Like A Rolling Stone,'" in commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the song being recorded. The beginning premise of the article which dealt with the mixed reception of Dylan's latest and still very new album *Bringing It All Back Home* was a bit off the mark, especially the part concerning TV host Les Crane.

In this article, Sam Pethers wrote: "The general feeling toward Dylan's new work was well capitulated during an interview on the Les Crane Show in February 1965. In talking about Dylan's songwriting skills, Crane said, "For those out in the audience that might not know all of the songs you've written just name a few of the big ones." Dylan reluctantly replied, "Ohhhh, [Subterranean Homesick Blues](#)", to which Crane quickly interjected, "That ain't one of the big ones, how 'bout ["Blowin' In The Wind"](#)". The mention of "Blowin' In The Wind" received an ovation from the audience."

Perhaps Sam Pethers was writing from reading a transcript of the show as opposed to the audio. (Sadly a video of this show does not seem to exist.). Dylan appeared on the Les Crane Show, a late night show, ABC's answer to *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* broadcast from New York City, on February 17, 1965. At the time of the show no one, including Les Crane knew of the existence of the song, "Subterranean Homesick Blues." A 45 rpm single of the song with "She Belongs To Me" would be released a couple of weeks later at the beginning of March, followed by the release of the album a few weeks after that.

I was lucky enough to watch the Les Crane Show the night Dylan was on. Dylan was rarely on TV back then, a practice he's continued throughout his career. While there were other guests that night on the show, Dylan was the main guest. He sang two songs, debuting "It's All Over Now Baby Blue," at the beginning of the show, and "It's Alright Ma, (I'm Only Bleeding)" which Dylan had been performing at his concerts the previous autumn at the end of the show. On both songs, Dylan was accompanied by guitarist Bruce Langhorne who was part of the New York City folk music scene, and previously had backed Dylan on "Corrina Corrina" on *Freewheelin'*. Langhorne played an acoustic Martin guitar, but he had a pickup in the guitar providing an electric sound. Excepting duets, and a couple of very early appearances, Dylan always played solo. The show also revealed a new look for Dylan. Up to that point, Dylan's concert attire was a suede jacket and blue jeans. On Les Crane, he appeared wearing a suit, probably the same one he would wear on the cover of *Bringing It All Back Home*, with a white shirt with a snapped snap tab collar. "It's All Over Now Baby Blue" joined two songs "I Don't Believe You" and "It Ain't Me Babe"

from Dylan's current album at the time, *Another Side* which was only six months old, in sounding suspiciously like rock and roll.

After the first song, Dylan did something that never happened before or since, he sat down and talked, staying onstage the entire show. And he was hysterically funny and Les Crane played right along with him. So when Les Crane was trying to let his audience know who Bob Dylan was and what songs he had written, and Dylan said, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," which was right in line with other comments Dylan had made during the night, Crane just figured it was another joke. But no one knew Dylan wasn't kidding until a few weeks later, and soon Dylan's new look and sound would be promoted in record stores across the US in the biggest campaign Columbia records had down so far with little standup Dylan's holding a Fender Stratocaster wearing that suit and shades, that either said, "No one sings Dylan like Dylan" and "Bob Dylan brings it all back home on Columbia Records."